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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 002245

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, INL. INR

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SMIG](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [KCRM](#) [SNAR](#) [HA](#) [VE](#) [DR](#)
SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ORIENTATION VISIT OF WHA/CAR DIRECTOR DE
PIRRO

Classified By: Classified by CDA Roland Bullen for
Reasons 1.4 (b) AND (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On September 6 and 7, WHA/CAR Office Director Velia De Pirro traveled to the Dominican Republic for a series of orientation meetings with both Embassy staff and leading Dominican figures, including the Chief of the National Police, the President of the DEA-equivalent National Directorate for Drug Control, the Attorney General, the President of the Senate, the Secretary of Industry and Commerce, and the Foreign Minister, as well as representatives from human rights/civil rights organizations. On the whole, Dominican officials presented their agendas without specific requests for assistance. All meetings were accompanied by Econ-Pol Counselor and poloff with additional participants as noted. End summary.

Law Enforcement Officials

-- Chief of the National Police, Maj. Gen. Rafael Guillermo Guzman Fermin

¶2. (C) Accompanied additionally by RSO (Acting NAS Director) Joe Hooten and NAS Police Advisor Abelardo Arevalos, De Pirro met with newly appointed National Police Chief Rafael Guillermo Guzman Fermin, who outlined a complex and ambitious plan to transform the National Police into a less militarized, more transparent, corruption-free, community-based policing organization. The plan includes the restructuring of commands, improved training, increased use of technology to better position police in high-crime areas, dismissal of highly corrupt officers (and redeeming others), and the public release of accurate crime statistics based on international indices. (Note: Guzman had confidentially discussed his plan with Embassy personnel in the 18-months prior to his appointment, during which time a number of lower-ranking officers were dismissed on narcotics and corruption charges. End note.)

¶3. (C) Guzman said that despite threats to his safety and the assassination of the head of his security detail (allegedly by elements within the National Police), he would undertake the anti-corruption plank of his plan. He asked for assistance from U.S. law enforcement agencies based at Embassy Santo Domingo. (Note: Embassy assesses threats against Guzman as legitimate and is assisting with the development of measures to improve his personal security, including reviewing possible INL-funded training for his

personal protective detail. End note.)

¶4. (C) Guzman described the need for accurate statistics as necessary to challenge corruption and malfeasance. He accused his predecessor (Bernardo Santana Paez) of purposefully manipulating crime statistics to present a more favorable image of the crime situation in the Dominican Republic. Allegedly, Santana Paez reported the decline in the murder rate while ignoring increases in other serious crimes and, in some cases, actively discouraged crime reporting from some police districts.

¶5. (SBU) In terms of demilitarization, Guzman Fermin envisioned a philosophical change in the police force's training and mission, stressing its role as an agent of public security, stability and community development, with an increased emphasis on human rights and the proper use of force. Guzman also said he would incrementally discontinue the popular joint police-military patrols that were initiated under his predecessor by presidential mandate.

-- President of the National Drug Control Directorate, Maj. Gen. Rafael Radhames Ramirez Ferreira

¶6. (C) De Pirro, also accompanied by DEA Country Attache Peter Reilly and DEA Group Supervisor John Niedzialek, met with the head of the National Drug Control Directorate (DNCD), a DEA-equivalent agency led by Maj. Gen. Rafael Radhames Ramirez Ferreira. Ramirez linked the presence of U.S. assets (i.e., aircraft, boats, radars, etc.) in the Caribbean with a marked decrease in penetration of Dominican air and maritime territory by narcotics traffickers, as well as a demonstrable decrease in the amount of illegal narcotics entering the Dominican Republic. He charged that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was attacking Dominican youth by

permitting the use of northern Venezuela as a staging/departure area for narcotics flights heading north. According to Ramirez, Chavez will remain immune from significant governmental criticism by virtue of "Petrocaribe," an agreement under which cut-rate financing permits the Dominican Republic to import as much as 50,000 barrels of Venezuelan petroleum daily. Ramirez admitted that while he might criticize Chavez privately, he could not do so publicly. Ramirez set the transit of drugs from Venezuela squarely against what he views as a profound crisis in Dominican society. Noting that 70 percent of those detained for drug offenses are under 30 years of age, Ramirez predicted that within 10 years the Dominican Republic will see heads of banks that will either be drug addicts or narcotics traffickers.

-- Attorney General, Radhames Jimenez Pena

¶7. (SBU) During a courtesy call, Attorney General Radhames Jimenez Pena noted excellent bilateral law enforcement cooperation and welcomed joined efforts on extradition and trafficking in persons. In response to De Pirro's questions regarding anti-trafficking efforts and in particular the treatment of victims who are often held in prison prior to deportation, Jimenez admitted that there was work to be done in order to provide proper care and protection for the victims of trafficking.

¶8. (SBU) Addressing the need for greater professionalism in the prosecutorial services, Jimenez spoke of his hope for a constitutional amendment to codify a recently established career track for prosecutors. In doing so, he noted both the importance of seasoned attorneys and the weakness of a political patronage system in assuring capable prosecutors.

Legislators

¶10. (SBU) De Pirro paid a courtesy call on Senate President (and incumbent PLD General Secretary) Reinaldo Pared Perez,

who set it up as a press event with press both in the room and staked-out outside. Discussion focused on the need for legislation related to the fight against human trafficking. She encouraged increased support for investigating and prosecuting human trafficking, as well as greater assistance to the victims of trafficking. Pared plead inadequate funds, conflated trafficking with smuggling, and suggested that the Dominican Republic looked to "Haiti for the solution." Continuing in a similar vein, when discussing difficulties faced by Dominicans of Haitian decent in obtaining birth registration documents (rendering them functionally stateless and creating a perpetual underclass), Pared suggested that this was not a matter for the Dominican Senate, but rather was in the purview of the Dominican-Haitian binational commission. (Note: There is pending legislation that would deny citizenship to the children of foreign parents. End note)

Rights Activists

¶11. (U) In brief meetings designed to express support for NGO efforts, De Pirro met separately with Servio Tulio Castanos Guzman, Director of the Foundation for Institutionalility and Justice (FINJUS), and Sonia Pierre, founder and Director of the Haitian-Dominican Women's Movement (MUDAH).

¶12. (U) In Castanos' overview of FINJUS' role in Dominican society, he stressed that the unique composition of the group (rights activists and academics mixed with business persons) gives it increased relevance and traction with Dominican decision makers and highlighted various victories, such as the establishment of a Dominican Freedom of Information Act.

¶13. (U) Pierre spoke largely of her struggles to counter societal discrimination against Dominicans born of Haitian decent and to assist these individuals in obtaining the necessary documentation to enable them to fully participate in Dominican society.

Other Executive Officials

-- Secretary of Industry and Commerce, Melanio Paredes

¶14. (U) In a meeting also accompanied by CDA Bullen, new Secretary of Industry and Commerce Melanio Paredes stressed

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the strengthening of bilateral commercial ties, facilitated, in part, by the proposed opening of new commercial offices in Washington, New York, Miami, and San Juan.

¶15. (SBU) Paredes referenced DR-CAFTA as an overall "good," but repeated the critique of the President of the Dominican Association of Free Zones (ADOZONA) that ultimately Dominican competitiveness under DR-CAFTA can only come through governmental reduction of fixed costs. Likewise, Paredes stressed that governmental incentives (subsidization of salaries, electricity and water consumption, etc.) must be extended to other businesses in order to effectively compete in a global trading environment. Paredes reported that current law incentivizing free trade zone businesses will likely be modified to take this into account.

¶16. (SBU) Paredes also noted that he is looking toward the United States for assistance in training businessmen and owners of micro-enterprises in how best to operate under DR-CAFTA, particularly in terms of refocusing the agricultural sector to better exploit comparative advantages. He also looks toward the United States for increased direct investment in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti, while

simultaneously calling for increased French and Canadian investment on both sides of the border.

¶17. (SBU) Touching on the border, Paredes noted the flagship economic powerhouse of the various free trade zones to be Grupo M, a cross-border textile concern that is currently diversifying into footwear. In discussing Grupo M, CDA Bullen suggested that further expansion of Grupo M along the Dominican-Haitian border might have a positive economic impact in both countries. Paredes concurred, quoting a similar assessment by an unnamed U.S. economist, but raised the issue of difficulties with U.S. Customs as something that might impede an expansion.

¶18. (SBU) Speaking of the nation's general economic outlook, Paredes noted a prime concern to be Dominican reliance on petroleum, in that its price is speculative and that it is sourced largely from the United States, creating dependence on a single supplier. A reduction in consumption is sought, especially in terms of gasoline, but Paredes noted it is "difficult to ask people to reduce." In order to force conservation, Paredes looks toward a gasoline pricing mechanism that would result in fewer, but higher changes in gasoline prices (so as to purposefully create pricing shocks). There are no plans at this time to increase refining capacity.

¶19. (SBU) Considering the above, CDA Bullen suggested further investigation into the use of alternative biofuels. Paredes declared this to be politically dangerous, in that Dominican milk producers utilizing soy have already voiced their concern over a potential shift in crop usage. He went on to expand his argument by predicting a biofuel driven distortion in the market price of corn, essentially parroting an argument already made by Venezuela's Chavez. ("With the crisis that we have it's necessary to find an alternative, but we must have food security.") A switch to natural gas was also ruled out by Paredes based on speculative pricing and high opportunity costs. Ultimately, Paredes concluded that a change to alternative fuels will come about eventually through scientific developments, likely in the solar electricity field.

-- Foreign Minister, Carlos Morales Troncoso

¶20. (U) Accompanied by CDA Bullen, De Pirro met with Foreign Minister Carlos Morales Troncoso for a wide-ranging working lunch.

- A. NAM, Iran, and the UNSC

¶21. (C) Morales, who had recently returned from a trip to Hanoi and a Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) meeting in Iran ("Human Rights and Cultural Diversity Conference"), declared

Iran to be "stuck back 1,000 years." He stressed that his interest in attending the NAM meeting was to simply procure votes for the Dominican candidacy for a UN Security Council seat and that he had ducked both an offered meeting by Iranian Vice-President Parviz Davoodi and a group lunch hosted by President Ahmadinejad. He half-jokingly suggested that the Iranian government "lost" his luggage on his return to the Dominican Republic as payback for these slights.

¶22. (C) In terms of progress in securing votes, Morales noted that he had personally spoken to 47 of 49 leaders present in Tehran and that the Dominican Republic had 20 of 34 GRULAC votes "locked-up," as well as the full support of CARICOM. He inquired as to possible U.S. support, to which Bullen and De Pirro responded by stating that the U.S. position is to rely on the consensus decision of regional groups and to refrain from publicly expressing support for individual candidacies.

- B. Cuba and Venezuela

¶23. (C) Touching on Cuba, Morales remarked that he had

approached Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque in the margins of the NAM meeting and had suggested that Cuba would be better served by adopting the Vietnamese economic model. Roque replied that that was the direction in which Cuba was heading.

¶24. (C) Morales' remarks on Venezuela were also brief and were focused exclusively on Petrocaribe, an agreement with Venezuela to import 50,000 barrels of Venezuelan petroleum daily with exceptionally generous financing. Of particular note was that Venezuela would accept an exchange of services (largely access to "all inclusive" tourist resorts) as full compensation for the first 1 percent payment due on the 400 million USD valued deal.

- C. Human rights (generally) and Haiti (specifically)

¶25. (C) Discussing Haiti, Morales suggested that bilateral relations would best improve in private, and that efforts by an "international conspiracy" to sully the name of the Dominican Republic (in regard to Dominican treatment of the migrant Haitian population) unnecessarily complicate matters.

He claimed to have said as much directly to leaders of various non-governmental organizations, who he deemed "rabble rousers," while on a recent trip to London. He noted the continued need for U.S. investment in Haiti, but also suggested that it would be helpful and appropriate if France and Canada increased investment there. He noted, moreover, close personal relationships between himself and his Haitian counterpart, as well as Presidents Fernandez and Preval. In contradiction to public speculation, he also found the Dominican-Haitian binational commission to be progressing adequately.

¶26. (SBU) He revealed that proposed implementing legislation for the 2004 General Migration Law, legislation which would regularize and legitimize the legal status of long-term illegal migrants, remained "under review" in the office of Franklin Almeyda, Minister for Interior and the Police. (Note: This legislation has been under review since October ¶2005. End Note)

¶27. (C) He appeared surprised when told that UN Special Rapporteurs for Racism and Minorities were planning visits to the Dominican Republic in the near future, but stated that they would be welcome. (Note: By definition, visits by these rapporteurs can only come about through invitation by the government. End Note)

¶28. (C) Following a demarche by De Pirro requesting support for Felice Gaer's reelection to the UN Committee Against Torture, Morales committed to examining her candidacy. He also indicated that he would look into supporting U.S. efforts before the United Nations Third Committee and would inform us should he become aware of any Cuban human rights initiatives stemming from the Tehran meeting.

- D. Outstanding debt for services

¶29. (SBU) De Pirro addressed one additional matter with Morales - the payment of fees owed Michael Skol for contracted consultation services performed during the Mejia administration. While noting that Skol's painting of President Fernandez as a dangerous communist during the

run-up to the 2004 presidential election had not won him much support in the current administration, Morales said that the government had "no problem" making the payment after the new budget was passed by Congress.

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